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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; December 22, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo
ROKG to Stop Assisting "Zombie" Companies Kept Alive
by Government and Bank Handouts

JoongAng Ilbo, All TVs
[1](#)N. Korea Declares Yellow Sea Border "Firing Zone"

Dong-a Ilbo
Korea Invited to NATO Meeting on Afghanistan Next Year

Hankook Ilbo
Number of "Working Homeless" Reaches 100,000

Hankyoreh Shinmun
Six in 10 Cancer Patients Survive
for More Than Five Years after Diagnosis

Segye Ilbo
President Lee Hopes to Advance ROK's Target to Secure Its Own
Nuclear Power Technologies by a Few Years

Seoul Shinmun
Rival Parties Agree to Convene
National Assembly Session Dec. 29

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

The North Korean naval command said yesterday that it would designate the waters near the Northern Limit Line (NLL) - the de facto inter-Korean sea border in the Yellow Sea drawn by the U.S.-led United Nations Command at the end of the Korean War in 1953 - as a "peacetime naval firing zone" for coastal and island artillery units, in response to the ROK's "reckless military provocations." (All)

An ROKG official responded by saying: "The announcement is only the latest attempt by the North to raise tensions in the Yellow Sea and to nullify the NLL." (JoongAng)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

According to Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun, there is a possibility that North Korean leader Kim Jong-il may visit China in January or early February to discuss the North's nuclear and succession issues.
(Dong-a, Segye)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-N. Korea

All ROK media covered North Korea's designation yesterday of a "peacetime firing zone" along the disputed inter-Korean sea border in the Yellow Sea. The North Korean naval command was quoted: "To counter the reckless and provocative military maneuvers by the warmongers in the South Korean military, our Navy declares the waters near the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) in the Yellow Sea 'a peacetime naval firing zone' for coastal and island artillery units. All fishing boats and warships in that zone should take security measures to protect themselves."

Conservative Chosun Ilbo quoted an ROK security official as saying: "The North Korean military is apparently seeking ways to get revenge for its crushing defeat in a skirmish in the Yellow Sea last month."

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This appears to be a psychological pressure tactic. (The North), however, will find that a physical provocation will be more difficult (to carry out)." Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo cited an ROKG official as saying: "The announcement is only the latest attempt by the North to raise tensions in the Yellow Sea and to nullify the NLL." Moderate Hankook Ilbo headlined its article: "North's Designation Appears to be Strategic Rhetoric, Rather Than Preparation for Provocation."

STEPHENS